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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

NFAC 8075-80

12 December 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: Richard Lehman  
Chairman, National Intelligence Council

FROM: Robert M. Gates  
National Intelligence Officer for USSR-EE

Major General Ennis C. Whitehead, Jr.  
National Intelligence Officer for Ground Purpose Forces

SUBJECT: NIE 11-10: Soviet Military Capabilities to Project Power to Distant Areas

1. We met yesterday with the Senior Review Panel, Hans Heymann, Gray Cowan and several members of the Analytic Group to discuss NIE 11-10. The group agreed that the basic research on Soviet opportunism in the Third World necessary to address gaps identified by the SRP in 11-10-79 has not been done -- and that an NIE draft is not an appropriate forum to do it. We, therefore, recommend that this NIE be undertaken a year from now, but that research begin as soon as possible on several questions fundamental to understanding Soviet activities in the Third World. The results of this research could permit us to make NIE 11-10-82 an important contribution to the policy process [redacted]

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2. The challenge the new Administration will face from the Soviets in the Third World will, in our view, be basically the same faced by its predecessors: either directly, or through the use of surrogates, the USSR taking advantage of local opportunities to establish dependence on Soviet military equipment and security support, accompanied by Soviet influence on the local scene and/or an indigenous government sympathetic to "socialism" and hostile to the US. Current examples include South Yemen, Angola, Ethiopia and, at least potentially, Nicaragua [redacted]

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3. While we can measure Soviet arms sales, economic assistance and even capacity to deploy their own forces to various parts of the Third World, we do not have good answers to the following kinds of questions:

--By what criteria do the Soviets opt for some opportunities but not others;

--What makes certain Third World countries susceptible to Soviet overtures and others not;

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- We assume military supplies are a key part of Soviet success. But is their record of "success" today any better or their inroads more permanent than a decade or two ago when US arms were much more available? Is our assumption wrong or just incomplete?
- How successful have the Soviets really been in the Third World? In light of Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, the Congo, Indonesia, Nigeria and other Soviet failures, is the US' present preoccupation overdrawn?
- What have been the causes of Soviet failures? Can they be generalized into a US counterstrategy?
- How do the Soviets determine in a given country whether to support the government or an insurgency? On ideological or realpolitik grounds, or the special chemistry of each local situation?
- Do the Soviets have a doctrine (apart from general support for national liberation movements) or established procedures for dealing with the Third World?
- Is there a Soviet strategy to deny the US critical raw materials available primarily in Third World countries?

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4. We regard these and similar questions as key to understanding a dynamic and worrisome element of Soviet foreign policy -- a challenge that has bedeviled past US Presidents and that will bedevil President Reagan. By addressing these questions in research programs in 1981, we will be prepared to write an NIE this time next year that can truly offer insight into this challenge and into possible counterstrategies.

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5. We urge you to forward this proposal to Bruce Clarke, with your endorsement of the research effort we propose. The option of getting DIA or INR to address some aspects of this problem should be considered.

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MG Ennis C. Whitehead, Jr.

Robert M. Gates

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